



EQUALITY
ILLINOIS

PRESS RELEASE

Founded in 1991, Equality Illinois is the state's oldest, largest and most effective organization advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 21, 2014

EQUALITY ILLINOIS LAUDS RULING LAUNCHING MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN COOK COUNTY

Concern remains over attempts to repeal or weaken law

CHICAGO – Equality Illinois today lauded the ruling of U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman to begin issuing marriage licenses immediately to same-sex couples in Cook County.

At the same time, Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans, blasted attempts to weaken or repeal the freedom to marry.

"Tens of thousands of Illinois couples have been waiting for a long time, some for decades, for their love, commitment and marriage to be recognized. This day - and the opportunity to finally get married - could not have come sooner," Cherkasov said. "We congratulate all of the couples and their families, and the people of Illinois on this significant day."

Meanwhile, as in some other states, there is a campaign in Illinois by marriage opponents to gut or rescind the Illinois *Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act*. A hearing has been scheduled next week by the Illinois Senate Executive Committee on a bill introduced by state Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon) to overturn the law. Another bill submitted by state Rep. Josh Harms (R-Watseka) wants to expand on the exemptions already included in the new marriage law that protect religious institutions and members of the clergy from being forced to perform or recognize same-sex marriages.

"Having lost the war, opponents to the freedom to marry now want to refight the battles and turn back the march of history and the progress of the state of Illinois," Cherkasov said. "These bills demonstrate that marriage opponents are not giving up and they're not closing up shop in Illinois. We know from every other important social progress in our nation that the opponents do not just walk away. That is why we cannot rest on our laurels and must continue to be vigilant, to fight, to educate, and to vote."

With the swiftness of the ruling and its immediate effectiveness, there are many questions about implementation of the law. Many of them are answered in the Equality Illinois guide *Marriage Rights in Illinois*, which can be read and downloaded here: http://www.equalityillinois.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Marriage_Rights-5.pdf.

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